



Billing Code: 3510-TL

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Telecommunications and Information Administration

First Responder Network Authority

[Docket Number: 160429380-6380-01]

RIN 0660-XC025

Notice of Availability of a Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for the East Region of the Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network and Notice of Public Meetings

AGENCY: First Responder Network Authority, National Telecommunications and Information Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce.

ACTION: Announcement of availability of a draft programmatic environmental impact statement and of public meetings.

SUMMARY: The First Responder Network Authority (“FirstNet”) announces the availability of the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for the East Region (“Draft PEIS”). FirstNet also announces a series of public meetings to be held throughout the East Region to receive comments on the Draft PEIS. The Draft PEIS evaluates the potential environmental impacts of the proposed nationwide public safety broadband network in the East Region, composed of Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, and West Virginia.

DATES: Submit comments on the Draft PEIS for the East Region on or before July 6, 2016.

FirstNet will also hold public meetings in each of the 13 states and the District of Columbia. See

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION section for meeting dates.

ADDRESSES: At any time during the public comment period, members of the public, public agencies, and other interested parties are encouraged to submit written comments, questions, and concerns about the project for FirstNet's consideration or to attend any of the public meetings.

Written comments may be submitted electronically via www.regulations.gov, FIRSTNET-2016-0002, or by mail to Amanda Goebel Pereira, NEPA Coordinator, First Responder Network

Authority, National Telecommunications and Information Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce, 12201 Sunrise Valley Drive, M/S 243, Reston, VA 20192. Comments received will

be made a part of the public record and may be posted to FirstNet's Web site (www.firstnet.gov)

without change. Comments should be machine readable and should not be copy-protected. All

personally identifiable information (*e.g.*, name, address) voluntarily submitted by the commenter

may be publicly accessible. Do not submit confidential business information or otherwise

sensitive or protected information. The Draft PEIS is available for download from

www.regulations.gov, FIRSTNET-2016-0002. A CD containing the electronic files of this

document is also available at public libraries (see Chapter 22 of the Draft PEIS for the complete

distribution list). See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** section for public meeting addresses.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For more information on the Draft PEIS,

contact Amanda Goebel Pereira, NEPA Coordinator, First Responder Network Authority,

National Telecommunications and Information Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce,

12201 Sunrise Valley Drive, M/S 243, Reston, VA 20192.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Public Meetings

Attendees can obtain information regarding the project and/or submit a comment in person during public meetings. The meeting details are as follows:

- Washington, DC, May 16, 2016, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., 200 I St SE, 1st Floor, Washington, DC 20003
- Annapolis, MD, May 19, 2016, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., Children's Theater of Annapolis, 1661 Bay Head Rd, Annapolis, MD 21409
- Bangor, ME, May 24, 2016, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., Bangor Public Library, 145 Harlow St, Bangor, ME 04401
- New York City, NY, May 24, 2016, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., New York Marriott Marquis, 160 Central Park South, New York, NY 10019
- Boston, MA, May 25, 2016, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., Boston Offices, Exchange Place Boston, 53 State St, Boston, MA 02109
- New Haven, CT, May 25, 2016, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., New Haven Public Library, Ives Main Branch, 133 Elm St, New Haven, CT 06510
- Providence, RI, May 26, 2016, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., Rhode Island Convention Center, 1 Sabin St, Providence, RI 02903
- Albany, NY, May 26, 2016, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., Albany Public Library, Arbor Hill/West Hill Branch, 148 Henry Johnson Blvd, Albany, NY 12210
- Richmond, VA, May 31, 2016, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., T. Edward Temple Building, 901 W Main St, Richmond, VA 23219

- Burlington, VT, May 31, 2016, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., Fletcher Free Library, 235 College St, Burlington, VT 05401
- Manchester, NH, June 1, 2016, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., Manchester Historic Association, Millyard Museum, 200 Bedford St, Manchester, NH 03101
- Charleston, WV, June 2, 2016, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., Charleston Civic Center, 200 Civic Center Dr, Charleston, WV 25301
- Harrisburg, PA, June 14, 2016, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., Madeline L. Olewine Memorial Library, 2410 N Third St, Harrisburg, PA 17110
- Trenton, NJ, June 15, 2016, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., New Jersey State Museum, 205 W State St, Trenton, NJ, 08608
- Dover, DE, June 16, 2016, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., Dover Public Library, 35 E Loockerman St, Dover, DE 19901

Background

The Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012 (Pub. L. 112–96, Title VI, 126 Stat. 156 (codified at 47 U.S.C. 1401 *et seq.*)) (the “Act”) created and authorized FirstNet to take all actions necessary to ensure the building, deployment, and operation of an interoperable, nationwide public safety broadband network (“NPSBN”) based on a single, national network architecture. The Act meets a longstanding and critical national infrastructure need, to create a single, nationwide network that will, for the first time, allow police officers, fire fighters, emergency medical service professionals, and other public safety entities to effectively communicate with each other across agencies and jurisdictions. The NPSBN is intended to enhance the ability of the public safety community to perform more reliably, effectively, and

safely; increase situational awareness during an emergency; and improve the ability of the public safety community to effectively engage in those critical activities.

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321–4347) (“NEPA”) requires federal agencies to undertake an assessment of environmental effects of their proposed actions prior to making a final decision and implementing the action. NEPA requirements apply to any federal project, decision, or action that may have a significant impact on the quality of the human environment. NEPA also establishes the Council on Environmental Quality (“CEQ”), which issued regulations implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA (see 40 CFR parts 1500–1508). Among other considerations, CEQ regulations at 40 CFR 1508.28 recommend the use of *tiering* from a “broader environmental impact statement (such as a national program or policy statements) with subsequent narrower statements or environmental analysis (such as regional or basin wide statements or ultimately site-specific statements) incorporating by reference the general discussions and concentrating solely on the issues specific to the statement subsequently prepared.”

Due to the geographic scope of FirstNet (all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and five territories) and the diversity of ecosystems potentially traversed by the project, FirstNet has elected to prepare five regional PEISs. The five PEISs will be divided into the East, Central, West, South, and Non-Contiguous Regions. The East Region consists of Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, and West Virginia. The Draft PEIS analyzes potential impacts of the deployment and operation of the NPSBN on the natural and

human environment in the East Region, in accordance with FirstNet's responsibilities under NEPA.

Next Steps

All comments received by the public and any interested stakeholders will be evaluated and considered by FirstNet during the preparation of the Final PEIS. Once a PEIS is completed and a Record of Decision (ROD) is signed, FirstNet will evaluate site-specific documentation, as network design is developed, to determine if the proposed project has been adequately evaluated in the PEIS or warrants a Categorical Exclusion, an Environmental Assessment, or an Environmental Impact Statement.

Dated: May 3, 2016.

Amanda Goebel Pereira,

NEPA Coordinator,

First Responder Network Authority.

[FR Doc. 2016-10698 Filed: 5/5/2016 8:45 am; Publication Date: 5/6/2016]